

# *Let's Schmooze*

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## **It's Getting Crowded Around Here**

There are lots of us here on Earth. Currently, we number more than seven billion people, yet our planet's carrying capacity ~ at moderate Western styles of living ~ is only about one to two billion people ~ maybe three billion if you really push it.

Because of this over-population, we are consuming Earth's resources at a grossly unsustainable rate. Earth would have to be about sixty 60% percent larger than it is just to keep up with current population needs. We are literally stripping our planet of resources that will never come back to us. When all the resources run out ~ what then? Easter Island?

The global human population is expected to reach 9.7 billion by 2050, and top out later at more than 11 billion. China and India each have populations of more than one billion people, and they're growing. Our population problem is so huge that some researchers are concerned that even serious birth control or an extreme plague cannot get us out of this demographic quandary.

Resource depletion is just one of the problems arising from the huge human population. There's also the alarming research conducted by scientist John Calhoun.

About fifty 50 years ago, Calhoun conducted some animal experiments with lab rats focusing on behavioral abnormalities arising from overcrowding. In his experiments, all other variables were held constant. Population, or the number of rats in a given area, was the only variable manipulated and studied.

The results were both clear and rather disquieting. Hyper-aggression among the rats was easily seen. Both the cannibalism of baby rats and the maternal failure to take proper care of the younger rats were observed. Abnormal sexual activity and increased morbidity were recorded. Some rats mutilated themselves, or killed rats around them. Normally social creatures, some rats would withdraw into themselves as if severely depressed. In short, the expected social order of a normal rat colony totally collapsed.

We human "rats" can draw some strong parallels. We, too, live in a restricted area. Our biosphere measures roughly 197 million square miles in surface area by two miles high of easy breathing. Given current human technology, at lower middle class lifestyles Earth can sustainably accommodate about two billion human beings. Yet, the human count is at about seven billion, more than three times what Earth can comfortably accommodate. And the human population is quickly reaching up to around nine billion. See the parallels?

One has to wonder how many of our current social problems stem primarily from over-population. The increase in random violence ~ terrorism ~ could be an example. The breakdown of historic social norms could be another example. The large number of children that are essentially unparented ~ even in their own homes ~ could be a third example. Of course, rising levels of disease brought about by contagion and transmission ~ in turn caused by high population densities ~ might be a fourth example. The huge flow of migrants and refugees overwhelming national borders also does come to mind, doesn't it?

The human over-population problem is real, and the obvious solution is not acceptable. We have us a real challenge here, don't we!

This gives one pause for thought. We don't want to descend into the dark pit of endless warfare ~ struggling over already depleted raw resources. If we are to survive as a species on Earth, sustainability together with conservation in all aspects of daily existence is long overdue. After all, because of long-past environmental changes, dinosaurs were replaced by mammals. We really don't want to go the way of those old reptiles, do we?

We need to start living conservatively and thriftily right now. For help with that, look for *Kind Lifestyles* at the Article tab at [www.heirling.com](http://www.heirling.com). That article will help us get our heads screwed on straight.

It's something to think about. While we're thinking, it's probably a fact that the term "sustainable growth" is a dangerous oxymoron. What do you think? For more on that, look for article titles containing the term *sustainability* at the Article tab at [www.heirling.com](http://www.heirling.com).

For more info on the current dangers facing humanity, look for *Global Trends to Watch* at the Article tab at [www.heirling.com](http://www.heirling.com). It's our way of keeping tabs on the challenges facing us. There happen to be lots of challenges facing us!

It should be interesting to see how this whole thing plays out. In the meantime, conservation and moderation in our individual consumption and personal habits can help ease the burdens of over-crowding. If everyone pulls together, we might just make it through without an unspeakable catastrophe.

~ 'til we meet again ~